

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

RELATIVE TO THE

South Groton Christian Union,

1855—1864,

And the First Unitarian Parish

OF

AYER, MASS.,

1864—1885,

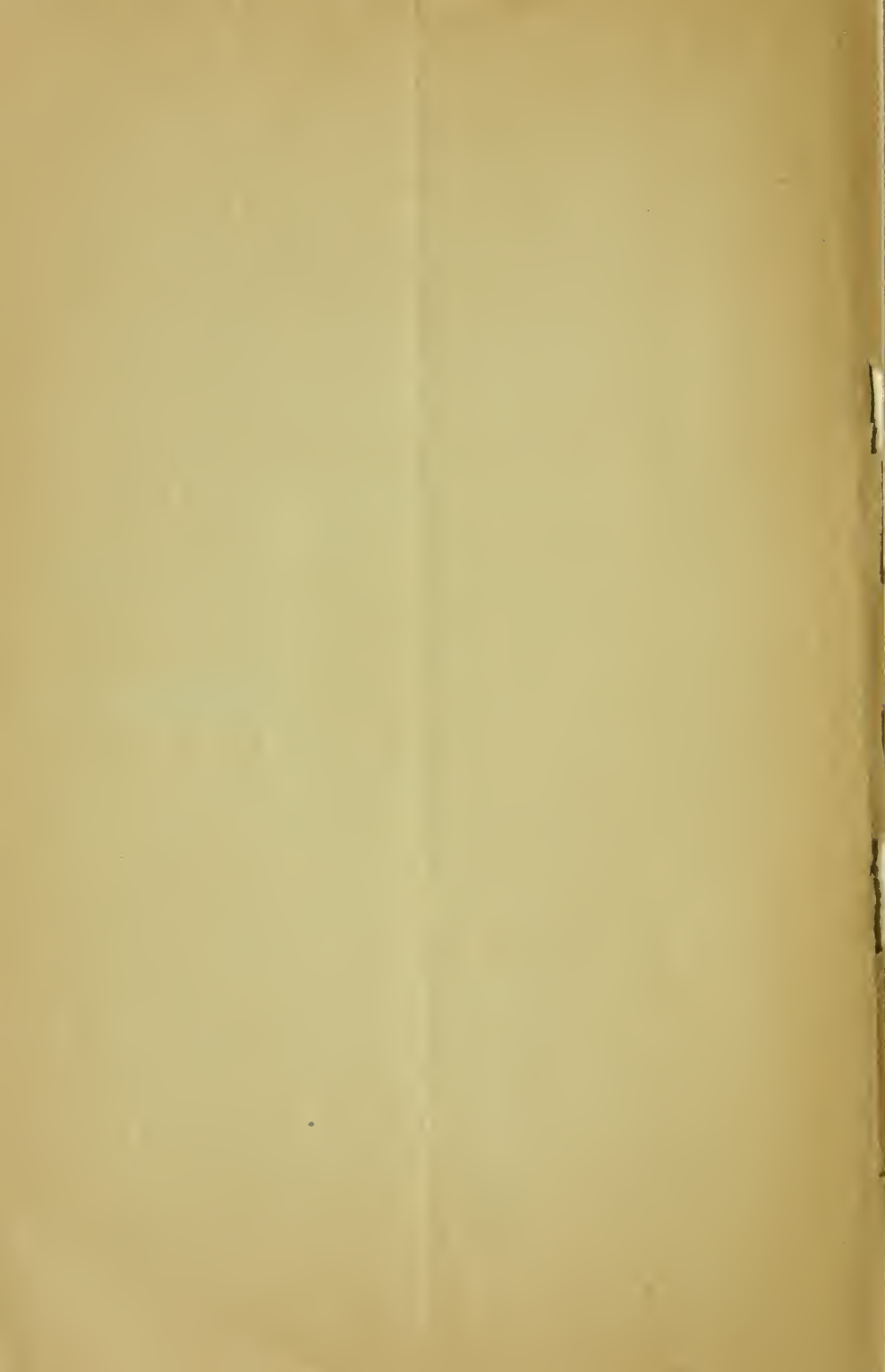
BY LYMAN CLARK,

MINISTER OF THE PARISH.



AYER, MASS. :

JOHN H. TURNER, PRINTER



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Original hymn, written for the ordination of Rev. Wm.
A. Start, by Mrs. R. B. Sanders :

Eternal Father, God of Love,
We raise our hearts as suppliants now ;
Thy choicest blessing from above
On him, thy servant, now bestow.

Teach him thy heavenly truths to tell,
With upright heart and holy hands,
As the sweet dews of Hermon fell —
As manna on the desert sands.

Make him a true disciple, Lord,
The faint to cheer, the stricken bless,
The poor in spirit fill with words
Of comfort, and true holiness.

O, give him strength and power divine,
Thy word to teach, thy love to prove ;
Forever may his spirit shine
Bright as thy glorious stars above.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

Upon taking pastoral charge of the Parish, the writer was naturally desirous of learning something of its history. Upon inquiry it appeared that members of the First Congregational Unitarian society, as it was then called, supposed that the South Groton Christian Union was the first church of South Groton. The Baptist society also claimed to be the first church of the place. It seemed proper that such a question of historical fact should be settled beyond dispute and in general, that the story of the origin and growth of the Parish be learned and preserved for the benefit of those who come after.

Inasmuch as the South Groton Christian Union was an independent society with no denominational association, excepting as a Christian Church, some may question the propriety of connecting its history with that of the society after it sought fellowship with first the Universalist and afterwards the Unitarian body. It is a sufficient answer to all scruples of this character to note that the corporate organization has been continuous, that no changes of the covenant were made in connection with those changes of name, that the property and records have remained in unquestioned possession of the one church corporation. This organization, as a religious society, has attained its thirtieth year, although the present association with the Unitarian body has been during a shorter period.

It remains only to add that for all errors, if such shall be discovered, in the use of sources of information, for the other imperfection of the discourse and for its being given to the press, the author must accept sole responsibility. If he shall have contributed to a more satisfactory result by some other hand, he will be repaid for the labor. In several cases further information would have been given, had not the duty of deferring to the pleasure of others, forbidden.

The discourse was originally delivered before the society Feb. 1, 1885, and subsequently revised for publication. The fifth day of September being the thirtieth anniversary of the dedication of the first house of worship built in South Groton suggested a suitable date for sending the manuscript to the printer. Several circumstances have led to some delay of the issue from the press.

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE.

"About thirty years of age."—Luke iii: 23.

Previous to the year 1853 religious services in South Groton appear to have been chiefly conducted by persons of the Baptist denomination. A church of this faith was organized in the year 1851; that society from its beginning worshipping at private houses, the old brick school-house which stood in the rear of this church edifice, the "White school-house," which stood where the high school building now stands, the Worcester and Nashua railway station and Pingry hall, which is now the Union house. That church association is entitled to whatever honor comes from being the first religious society organized in South Groton.*

Previous to and after the time of the organization of that church there appear to have been those who desired services of a different character, the evidence, in part, of which is a circular-sheet dated Sept. 28, 1853, issued in behalf of an association formed to erect a chapel for worship, no church edifice having previously existed in South Groton. From this circular we learn that Rev. J. Cooper issued a call for a meeting "for the purpose of taking into consideration the subject of building a meeting-house or chapel, and attending to other business mentioned in the call." Articles of association were adopted, the preamble to which declares that "This meeting being desirous of promoting the glory of God and the spiritual interests of our fellow men, we deem it expedient to erect a meeting-house at South Groton to be known by the name of the South Groton Union Chapel, for which purpose this meeting has been called together and the following resolutions, or articles, have been prepared, and are now submitted for its consideration." After the adoption of the preamble and articles of the building association, Nathaniel Stone, Calvin Fletcher, Robert Woods, David Chambers and Walter Lackey were chosen a committee to procure a site; Rev. J. Cooper, Calvin Fletcher, Robert Woods, David Chambers and Ebenezer Willis a building committee; Benj. Felch collector, and Calvin Fletcher treasurer.

CHAPEL ERECTED.

Rev. Mr. Cooper came to the place as a Methodist, but sought and obtained recognition by the Trinitarian Congre-

*Minutes of the Wachusett Baptist Association, 1883, Allen's History of the Baptist Church.

gationalists, his labors coming to an early close. But the movement in favor of a chapel went forward and it was finished in the spring of 1855. A church organization was effected on the twelfth of the following August by the adoption of the "Covenant of the South Groton Christian Union," which was written by Rev. David Fosdick, who had preached for the Union society after the departure of Mr. Cooper. The chapel built, a church society organized, a formal dedication of the house of worship took place on the fifth of September, Rev. Timothy Atkinson of Brooklyn, N. Y., Rev. Washington Gilbert of Harvard, Rev. David Fosdick of Groton and Rev. Charles Babbidge of Pepperell, taking part in the services. The discourse, which was by Mr. Fosdick, was entitled "Sect is Sin," and was published. It ably set forth the views of the preacher against all sectarianism and in favor of a union of all upon the Christian foundation. The whole doctrinal position of the Union at the time was expressed by the first article of its constitution, which declared that "This society shall be called the South Groton Christian Union, and its object shall be to promote the kingdom of God in our hearts and the hearts of others through the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Upon the completion of the Union Chapel the Baptist society immediately began to build and dedicated its house of worship in the year 1856. First as a religious society it was second in the erection of a church edifice. This explains the diverse impressions which are found among the people relative to which was the earlier. The Union society was the first to erect a house of worship, the Baptist society first in respect to religious organization. The honors of precedence to this extent are divided.

MR. FOSDICK having been chosen pastor of the Union society, Aug. 27, 1855, his ministry continued until July 1, 1860, or about five years. He had served the parish with little regard to pecuniary considerations and at the time of the close of the pastorate was earnestly devoted to the interests of the society. He had previously been pastor of the Hollis-st. church, Boston, and had preached at Sterling.

SECOND PASTOR.

The second pastor of the society was Rev. WILLIAM A. START, who was born March 1, 1837, educated at Tuft's college, class 1862, had pastoral charge of the

society from March 1, 1861, and was ordained and installed September 24, 1862. The order of services included an invocation by Rev. E. De Normandie of Littleton, scripture reading by Rev. H. H. Barber of Harvard, original hymn by Mrs. R. B. Sanders, ordaining prayer by Rev. E. T. St. John of Worcester, charge to the pastor by Rev. J. L. Fletcher of Lowell, right hand of fellowship by Rev. C. B. Lombard of Shirley Village, address to the people by Rev. C. Nightingale. Mr. Start resigned April 30, 1863. Of the Universalist denomination, he has since been secretary of the Massachusetts Universalist Convention, with which the society was in fellowship during his pastorate.

THIRD PASTOR.

Information is received that Rev. Mr. Whitney was employed by the society for some time, and an entry in the records of Jan. 2, 1865 shows that it was unanimously "Voted: That it is desirable to secure the services of Mr. Clark as minister of the society." The speaker is not aware what Mr. Clark is referred to as having been honored by choice to the pastorate. It does not appear that the choice took effect, for Rev. JOSIAH K. WAITE was formally installed May 24 of the year 1865. The invocation was by Rev. Seth Chandler of Shirley, reading of scriptures by Rev. H. H. Barber of Harvard, sermon by Rev. Ezra S. Gannett, D. D., of Boston, prayer of installation by Rev. Ephraim Abbott of Westford, charge by Rev. Alonzo Hill of Worcester, right hand of fellowship by Rev. G. M. Bartol of Lancaster, address to the church by Rev. Charles Babbidge of Pepperell, concluding prayer by Rev. Crawford Nightingale. Rev. Geo. M. Rice was scribe of the council. Mr. Waite was born in Sterling, Mass., fitted for college at Leicester Academy, graduated at Harvard in 1829, and completed his studies for the ministry in 1832 at the Cambridge Divinity School. He had been settled at Fitzwilliam, N. H., Gloucester, Mass., where he had a long and successful pastorate, in Fall River and in Malden. He was married June 3, 1833, to Abbie Cogswell Gibbon who died at Ayer, Nov. 7, 1865. She was a woman of rare gifts and beauty of character. A memorial of her life was published by her husband. Mr. Waite and Sarah Elizabeth Howe, his second wife, were married April 21, 1867.

In the year 1867 Mr. Waite asked the society to settle a colleague, which the society voted to do, but later, very

properly, it may be assumed, reconsidered its action, which was followed by the resignation of the pastor. Pending this action Rev. Mr. Brown was invited to become associate pastor of the society and satisfactory conditions were arranged which were cancelled by reconsideration. Mr. Waite died in Boston, November, 1872. Rev. Henry A. Miles, D. D., who was in college, divinity school and professional life the friend of Mr. Waite, speaks of him as "a man of practical good sense, of a kind heart, having a strong desire to be useful. He was respectable as a preacher, little given to controversial discourses, and interested chiefly in enforcing the duties of an upright, sincere and devout life."

THE FOURTH PASTOR.

REV. CRAWFORD NIGHTINGALE was born at Providence, R. I., November 3, 1816, being the son of Samuel Nightingale and Elizabeth Kinnicutt Nightingale, *nee* Thompson. He attended a private school at Providence — Roswell C. Smith, instructor; entered Brown University September, 1830, graduating in 1834; prepared for the ministry at Cambridge, 1835–1838. Having been ordained at Providence, November, 1838, he subsequently served in the ministry at Charlemont, Heath, Shelburne and Greenfield, Mass., followed by service as minister-at-large, Lowell, and pastorates at Chicopee and Athol. He was married at Athol to Mary Hoyt Williams, daughter of William Henry and Frances Wisewell Williams, *nee* Humphrey. He had served on local school committees.

Mr. Nightingale was invited to the pastorate by vote of the society, Oct. 12, 1867, and was installed April 8, 1868. Rev. Henry F. Jenks offered the invocation; Rev. Calvin Stebbins preached from the words — "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living;" Rev. G. M. Bartol offered the prayer of installation; Rev. W. P. Tilden gave the charge to the pastor; Rev. A. B. Vorse, the right hand of fellowship; Rev. Seth Chandler, the address to the people; Rev. Charles Babbidge, the concluding prayer.

THE FIRE.

Seventeen years, let us suppose, have passed since the spring when the first chapel in South Groton was built, it is now standing in the newly-incorporated town of Ayer. The records show that during a considerable portion of this time the society was incumbered with debt. The meetings

held for business purposes were often occupied with the raising of means to meet the obligations of the corporation. But these appear to have been so far disposed of as to permit of the thought of church extension. A meeting was called Saturday evening, March 2, 1872, the chief item of business of which appears to have been—"To take into consideration repairing, remodeling and enlarging of the church, the building of a vestry room and any other rooms that may be thought desirable for the benefit and convenience of the society. The meeting was repeatedly adjourned until April 13. A committee had been chosen to consider and report upon the necessary repairs. This committee apparently not ready to report, further adjournment was ordered for two weeks. The record which follows is by Abel Prescott, who was for many years parish clerk:

"About three hours after the adjournment of this meeting a fire was discovered in a building on Main street, occupied by J. F. Boynton and owned by Samuel Reed, it apparently having started from an unoccupied billiard room in the second story. It spread rapidly and soon eight other buildings were on fire. The wind being westerly, it spread easterly on the north side of Main street, and before four o'clock on Sunday morning, April 14, about forty buildings were destroyed, including the Unitarian church and almost the entire business portion of the town, the loss being estimated at from one hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand dollars, a terrible blow to Ayer. The Unitarian society lost their church, the bell, the only one in town, ringing out the alarm until the flames had fastened upon the tower in which it hung. The morning sun looked down upon several acres of blackened waste where the most valuable portion of the town had stood a few hours before.

The special meeting called to repair, remodel and enlarge the meeting house was no longer required, and its record stopped with the night of the fire that proved so destructive to the town."

BEAUTY FOR ASHES.

The scriptures tell us of a promise to "them that mourn in Zion," of "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," a promise fulfilled even to us. There are many pleasant features to be recalled in connection with the proceedings for the rebuilding of a house of worship. With liberal courtesy

the Orthodox Congregational Society offered the use of their church, which may well be remembered today with thanks. Superintendent C. L. Heywood, in behalf of the Fitchburg railway, offered the use of the refreshment room at the station, and an informal meeting was held there on the Saturday evening after the fire. The thanks of the society for courtesies received were duly expressed, and a committee chosen "to solicit aid in building a new church." That committee consisted of Rev. Crawford Nightingale, R. P. Woods, Abel Prescott, P. S. Rich, Abel L. Lawton and Henry A. Woods. The same duty was subsequently passed to R. P. Woods, L. W. Phelps, Henry A. Woods, R. R. Fletcher, A. L. Lawton and J. C. Parsons.

The offer of the use of the refreshment room for religious service was accepted, and one service maintained, this, apparently, being the beginning of the continuous usage of one service of preaching on Sunday, instead of two. The organist, Miss Mary J. Bancroft, offered the salary due her toward building the new church. A committee on location and plan of building, consisting of Rev. Crawford Nightingale, L. W. Phelps and A. L. Lawton, was chosen. This meeting being informal a second one was called in due form to ratify the action taken, the notice being posted upon an oak tree which remained upon the lot near where the church stood, and upon the door of the refreshment room at the station, where the society worshipped. After using the refreshment room for a time the society worshipped in a hall offered them by Mr. Harvey A. Woods, who also purchased and chiefly contributed the communion plate used by the society.

In due time the stately and beautiful church edifice, designed by Messrs. Earle and Fuller of Worcester, architects, and built by Messrs. Henry C. Sherwin and Charles F. Williamson, was erected on land purchased of Mary A. W. Champney and George H. Champney. The vestry was first occupied for worship, the auditorium being without pews or organ, which were provided later, largely through the efficient labors of John E. Hosmer. The church was dedicated Sept. 1, 1875. Rev. Warren Cudworth of East Boston, Rev. Charles Babbidge of Pepperell, Rev. Seth Chandler of Shirley, Rev. Mr. Smith of Tyngsboro' and Rev. Joshua Young of Groton, were present and took part in the services.

Mr. Nightingale tendered his resignation, to take effect

April 1, 1867, having served as minister of the society for ten years. His long pastorate, the longest of this society, notwithstanding his residence was in another town, was a tribute to his ability and courteous disposition which won a large measure of friendship, which still is felt by people of the parish and town. The records show that he was chairman of the committee on location, the committee on plan and committee to solicit funds for the building of the new church, his influence co-operating with that of others to secure the beautiful and good house of worship which was erected during his ministry.

THE FIFTH PASTOR.

REV. ALFRED EVERETT GOODNOUGH, the fifth pastor, was born at Montpelier, Vt., April 10, 1855, being the son of Alfred Goodnough and Harriet Newell Goodnough, *nee* Wheelock. He attended the high school, the Bishop Scott Grammar and Divinity School, Portland, Oregon, and the Meadville Theological School, graduating in 1878, subsequently taking a post-graduate course at the Harvard Divinity School. Mr. Goodnough was ordained as pastor of this society Sept. 11, 1878, having had charge of the parish since June previous.

The order of services included an invocation by Rev. Charles Babbidge; reading of the scriptures by Rev. Geo. S. Shaw; original hymn by Mr. Hobart Clark; sermon by Rev. Amory D. Mayo of Springfield; ordaining prayer by Rev. J. L. Seward of Lowell; right hand of fellowship by Rev. Granville Pierce of Medfield; charge to the pastor by Rev. Rush R. Shippen of Boston; address to the people by Rev. Crawford Nightingale of Boston; concluding prayer by Rev. Joshua Young of Groton. The pastorate closed in July, 1879.

Good report is heard of his work while here, and more especially of the interest in the services. He has been since settled at Bridgewater, from which place he went to Brockton, where a society was organized and a church built during his ministry. Mr. Goodnough was married Sept. 21, 1880, to Annie Frances Bartlett, the daughter of Walter Frederick and Annie Maria Bartlett, *nee* Curtis, of New York city.

SIXTH PASTOR.

REV. RUSHTON D. BURR was engaged by the parish committee. His pastoral labors beginning April 1, 1880, continued two years. His dignified and scholarly culture,

agreeable address and devotion to the higher religious interests will be remembered. The parish recorded its appreciation of his labors thus,—“Resolved, that we hereby recognize the faithful and earnest efforts with which he has endeavored to strengthen the cause of liberal Christianity in our church and Sunday school; that socially we shall miss his cordial greeting, and our earnest prayer is that peace, happiness and prosperity may attend him wherever he may be.”

SEVENTH PASTOR.

Of the present pastor it is not becoming that I should speak further than to present a few facts belonging to the records.

The seventh pastor was born Dec. 30, 1838, near the town of Buckhannon, Upshur County, West Va., Sago post-office having been since established at the birthplace. He was the son of Cornelius Clark, born at Bridgewater, Mass., and Abigail Clark, *nec* Wright, born at Westford, Mass. He attended private schools in West Va., and after the removal of the family to Illinois he enlisted in the 5th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry in 1861, serving more than four years in the successive grades of sergeant, second lieutenant and captain. Entered the Meadville Theological School in 1865, graduating in 1869. Has been successively employed in the ministry at Jacksonville, Ill. seven months; Lancaster, N. H., three years and a half; Petersham, Mass., eight years. Served as representative to the General Court of Massachusetts from the ninth Worcester district, 1879, being upon the committees upon education and parishes and religious societies. Has served ten years upon local school committees. Lyman Clark and Isabel Clough were married at Bethel, Maine, June 11, 1872. Miss Clough was born at Bath, N. H., being the daughter of Eber and Susan Clough, *nec* Stevens. Pastoral labors at this place were begun on the first Sunday of September, 1882. The installation service was delayed, for the purpose of first removing the indebtedness of the society on account of the church edifice, until March 7, 1884. At that time the order of services was as follows: Invocation by Rev. Geo. S. Shaw of Ashby; reading of the scriptures by Rev. Henry C. Parker of Nashua; sermon by Rev. Grindall Reynolds, secretary of the American Unitarian Association; prayer of installation by Rev. Joshua Young of Groton; charge by Rev. Charles Babbidge of Pepperell;

right hand by Rev. Josiah L. Seward of Lowell; address to the people by Rev. Alfred E. Goodnough; concluding prayer by Rev. Henry F. Jenks of Lawrence.

The society had received toward the discharge of its debt the most liberal co-operation of the American Unitarian Association, the North Middlesex Conference, the Massachusetts Evangelical Missionary Association and many friends.

UNITARIAN NAME.

The Unitarian name was first taken Nov. 21, 1864, or a little more than twenty years ago, the form of the name having been altered several times. It was first the South Groton Christian Union, this name being taken in 1855. In the year 1862 the name "Union Society" was chosen. Two years later, or 1864, the name "Unitarian Society" was taken, which was further amended in 1867 so as to read "The First Congregational Unitarian Society," the name at the present time being the "First Unitarian Parish of Ayer."

The covenant or constitution never contained anything that was inconsistent with the Unitarian position; no creed doctrinally objectionable to Unitarians has ever been held, and the Unitarians of the town have not wavered in the support of the society.

The nucleus of Unitarian sentiment and belief in South Groton was found in the families of Nathaniel Stone, Valancourt Stone, Calvin Fletcher, Rufus Fletcher, Nahum Stone, Abel Stone and others. To this nucleus was added from Shirley, the families of Thomas Page, Alfred Page, Henry A. Brown, Harvey A. Woods, Moses Woods, Samuel Farnsworth, Robert Woods, Levi J. Giddings, O. N. Wing and others, who wholly or in part gave support to the Unitarian society. The remaining families have come from various places.

The form of the original covenant has been given. While the name of the society and form of organization were at different times changed, the statement of object remained substantially the same until the year 1884 when a still shorter statement was adopted, as follows: "We whose names are subscribed, unite to promote the true worship of God and the welfare of mankind."

The church constitution adopted May 13, 1883, is based upon this statement of purpose: "As disciples of Jesus we unite to promote the true worship of God and welfare of

mankind with all the interests of pure religion and religious culture." It will be seen that the language of these statements was in part suggested by the conversation of Jesus with the Samaritan women to whom he said, "The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.

The church organization within the parish began with the pastorate of Rev. R. D. Burr, previous to that time one organization representing both church and parish. Thirty-two names are entered in the church book. The objects of the church and parish being essentially the same, entire harmony of action has been and should be found.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Records of the Sunday school are found which begin with the year 1862, when a constitution was adopted at an "annual meeting" which shows that a school had been previously maintained. The superintendent for the year 1862 was Abel Prescott; Geo. H. Greenwood, assistant. Among the other names which have followed, either as superintendent or assistant, are those of Edwin F. Stearns, O. N. Wing, H. P. Ross, Gibson Smith, J. Q. A. McCollister, M. D., Samuel Farnsworth, Rev. J. K. Waite, Eugene Turner, Daniel W. Fletcher, Edward Fletcher, Geo. H. Hill, Hattie J. Fletcher, Fred Farnsworth, Geo. Child, and Dea. H. A. Brown, who has served continuously since the year 1869, with the exception of two years.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION.

The social organization of the parish is and has been, chiefly in the hands of the women. I find records which begin with a revised constitution adopted in the year 1866, or nineteen years ago. There have been older records, as shown by the fact that the earliest at hand present a revised organization. It is very desirable that the old records should be found and preserved if in existence. The purpose of the society was stated in the records of 1866 thus: "The object shall be to promote the interests of the parish by our own spiritual culture, by mutually encouraging and strengthening a bond of Christian sympathy and love, and by obtaining funds for the aid of the parish, which shall always be expended in charity or otherwise by vote of the society."

The social meeting, as shown by the records, have been held at private houses, the vestry of the church and sometimes in a grove. Doubtless the open-air meetings have been as pleasant occasions as any that have been held. During the appropriate season they are worthy of repetition. During the previous eight years the women of the parish have by their meetings raised more than two thousand dollars for parish purposes.

THE CHOIR.

No records appear to be at hand to show the names of those who have been members of the choir. Reports agree in affirming that a high standard of musical excellence has been maintained. The organ was purchased in the year 1875, it now having been used by the society ten years. It previously belonged to the Unitarian church at Fitchburg. The persons reported as having acted as organists, either at the old church or the new, are Mrs. Rebecca B. Sanders, Miss Lucy Woods, Mrs. Lizzie Lapham Turner, Miss Mary Bancroft, Mr. M. M. Heath, Miss Bessie Boynton, and Miss Agnes B. Sanders.

THIRTY YEARS.

It will be thirty years next spring since the chapel of the South Groton Christian Union was built, thirty years next August since the Union society was organized, and thirty years next September since the first house of worship in this part of the old town was built. Surely there is reason for gratification in view of the progress of the thirty years in respect to the developments of the town, which now contains four religious societies which are housed, and a fifth which worships in a hall.

The builders of the old church did not look forward to so beautiful and well appointed a house as this, and when the fire came it was not in the thought of those who gathered upon those acres of ashes, that Sunday morning, that this beauty would spring from them. But so, in the providence of God, it has been ordered, fulfilling the scriptures, "beauty for ashes," in the most literal sense. It is honorable to the spot on which the former house was built, that it is now occupied by a noble town hall, dedicated to public use.

It has not been possible for me to recognize the labors of all who have contributed to these results. It is often true, as it doubtless has been here, that noblest service is rendered by nameless hands. It is to be hoped that all

have been rewarded in the past, "blessed in the work," as the scriptures declare of those who look into "the perfect law of liberty and continue therein." And let it be hoped that the parish has a future reward in the opportunity for usefulness which a growing place, a railway center, affords. May we be faithful to that opportunity as stewards who must render account.

APPENDIX A.

MEMBERSHIP.

Forty-three persons signed the covenant of the South Groton Christian Union, as adopted Aug. 12, 1855, their names being,—

David Fosdick,	Mary Ann Willard,
Sarah L. Fosdick,	Calvin D. Blanchard,
Nathaniel Stone,	Benjamin F. Feleh,
Lydia Stone,	Ebenezer Willis,
Harvey A. Woods,	George T. Woodbury,
Susan G. Woods,	Marah B. Woodbury,
John M. Porter,	B. H. Ruggles,
P. C. Litchfield,	Anna Ruggles,
Robert P. Woods,	Calvin Fletcher,
Wm. Durant,	Levi W. Phelps,
John Park,	F. G. Lufkin,
Sophia H. Park,	A. Hutchinson,
Abel Prescott,	Fannie Hutchinson,
Aug. K. Porter,	Harriet W. Hutchinson,
Joseph Waugh,	Francis L. Ware,
F. D. Waugh,	A. W. Churchill,
William Blanchard,	Timothy Frye,
Eunice Blanchard,	George H. Greenwood,
Elizabeth Blanchard,	J. D. Wing,
Nahum Stone,	L. W. Woods,
Abby A. Stone,	Artemas Wright.
Jerome H. Willard,	

Dates of signatures are not given.

The society having been reorganized March 3, 1862, thirty names were attached to the constitution. Those in addition to the names of the previous list were as follows:

Rufus R. Fletcher,	G. H. Rich,
Henry E. Sprague,	H. A. Brown,
J. C. Parsons,	Peter Tarbell,

A. S. Tuttle,
 P. S. Rich,
 B. L. Howe,
 J. Q. A. McColleston,
 W. A. Start,
 John Sprague,
 Augustus Dike,
 Augustus F. Colburn,

L. J. Spaulding,
 Valancourt Stone,
 O. N. Wing,
 J. C. Wing,
 Ellen A. Stone,
 Mary F. Willis,
 Eunice W. Smith,
 W. H. Woods.

The society was again reorganized July 23, 1872. Ninety-two persons signed the constitution then adopted. The names not previously given were,—

M. W. Woods,
 John E. Hosmer,
 Henry A. Woods,
 Nath'l Holden,
 Abel L. Lawton,
 T. W. Page,
 J. F. Hill,
 Lydia S. Sprague,
 Sarah H. Giddings,
 William Mitchell,
 Mrs. C. C. Parsons,
 Sarah J. Brown,
 Ellen A. Stone,
 Lizzie B. Turner,
 Mrs. L. J. Spaulding,
 Abbie A. Tuttle,
 Mrs. George Greenwood,
 Arthur Fenner,
 Emma Augusta Fenner,
 Miriam O. Hill,
 J. P. Billings,
 Sarah J. Billings,
 L. A. Buck,
 N. A. Buck,
 G. Tuttle,
 Mary E. Page,
 Agnes M. Sanders,
 Doel Sanders,
 S. E. Woods,
 B. F. Taft,
 C. E. Taft,
 A. D. Simmons,
 R. B. Simmons,

Charles E. Morrison,
 G. M. Child,
 Mrs. G. M. Child,
 Sylvice Mills,
 Mrs. M. L. Chisholm,
 Olive A. Prescott,
 N. A. Holden,
 Mrs. N. A. Holden,
 Benj. Taft,
 William B. Fenner,
 Mrs. R. M. Southwick,
 Mrs. Charles Perkins,
 Mrs. G. G. Day,
 Sophia Lawton,
 G. L. McColleston,
 Hattie J. Fletcher,
 E. H. Bigelow,
 Mrs. E. H. Bigelow,
 E. M. Carter,
 F. G. Templeton,
 Ella F. Phelps,
 Alfred Page,
 Geo. H. Child,
 Walter Beebe,
 H. F. Firmin,
 H. S. Turner,
 Frederick Whitney,
 James McRay,
 Charles H. Ware,
 Mrs. C. H. Ware,
 Mrs. Frederick Whitney,
 Mrs. J. L. Farwell,
 Mrs. S. F. Leslie,

M. M. Heath,
 Mary A. W. Champney,
 James A. Howe,
 Eugene A. Turner,

Miss Florence E. Day,
 Miss Mary Sherwin,
 Isabel Clark,
 Lyman Clark.

CONSTITUTION OF 1884.

A revised form of organization having been adopted Feb. 18, 1884, the entire list of signatures, one hundred and seventeen in number, may properly be given as representing substantially the present membership of the parish. Many changes by death, removal, or otherwise, will be noted in this list. The delay of publication permits of giving all signatures received to Jan. 6, 1886.

Arthur Fenner,
 W. B. Fenner,
 Mrs. W. B. Fenner,
 Levi W. Phelps,
 Alfred Page,
 Lydia Stone,
 Nahum Stone,
 Abby Stone,
 H. A. Woods,
 Susan G. Woods,
 John Q. A. McCollester,
 Georgiana L. McCollester,
 Lizzie B. Turner,
 Abbott W. Turner,
 Olive A. Prescott,
 L. J. Spaulding,
 Rebecca Spaulding,
 Sophia Lawton,
 Eunice W. Smith,
 B. F. Taft,
 Caroline E. Taft,
 F. F. Leslie,
 Sarah J. Leslie,
 Mary A. W. Champney,
 M. W. Woods,
 Geo. M. Child,
 Rosina Q. Child,
 John E. Hosmer,
 Mrs. G. G. Day,
 Florence E. Day,
 George H. Child,

Henry A. Brown,
 Sarah J. Brown,
 Lyman Clark,
 Isabel Clark,
 Flora L. Bigelow,
 Lizzie E. Champney,
 J. M. Woolford,
 Mariette M. Woolford,
 Sarah J. Fletcher,
 J. H. Fletcher,
 John H. Turner,
 Helen M. Turner,
 Harriet P. Brown,
 Cora E. Hosmer,
 George H. B. Turner,
 Huntley S. Turner,
 Louisa F. Bulkeley,
 Etta M. Carter,
 Walter R. Dickey,
 Jeannette A. Dickey,
 Ellen L. Puffer,
 F. A. Farnsworth,
 S. P. Farnsworth,
 Margaret B. Farnsworth,
 L. J. Giddings,
 L. F. Giddings,
 George Russell,
 Eliza Russell,
 Mrs. D. W. Fletcher,
 Mary Graves,
 Elizabeth Sprague,

E. H. Bigelow,
 Mrs. E. H. Bigelow,
 Mrs. L. J. Giddings,
 Mrs. J. L. Farwell,
 E. D. Martel,
 S. J. Billings,
 J. P. Billings,
 Nellie A. Buck,
 David J. Whittemore,
 C. H. Ware,
 Mrs. C. H. Ware,
 Benjamin Taft,
 Hattie W. Taft,
 Mrs. E. A. Fenner,
 Sarah R. Perkins,
 J. F. Hill,
 Mrs. Jason F. Hill,
 Mrs. Geo. H. Hill,
 Calvin D. Blanchard,
 Mrs. C. D. Blanchard,
 John M. Haggett,
 Carrie A. Haggett,
 Mrs. M. L. Chisholm,
 Sarah A. Sprague,
 Hattie J. Fletcher,
 Lizzie F. Felch,
 Robert Hume,
 Mrs. Robert Hume.

Charles E. Sprague,
 Agnes M. Blanchard,
 Samuel Blanchard,
 Sally Ann Stone,
 Charles H. Stone,
 Lena M. Phelps,
 Ella M. McCollester,
 Edward Q. McCollester,
 Flora A. Leslie,
 Chas. G. Woods,
 Addie C. Woods,
 Charlotte F. Giddings,
 Ella F. Phelps,
 Geo. H. Lovering,
 Anna M. Lovering,
 Ellen Graves,
 Fred Graves,
 Sadie E. Fenner,
 Agnes B. Sanders,
 Edmund Dana Bancroft,
 Phebe Bridge Bancroft,
 Mabel W. Champney,
 Emma Augusta Carman,
 H. Austin Stone,
 Estelle L. Hosmer,
 Chas. P. Dwinell,
 Martha P. Cooper,

APPENDIX B.

REVISED CONSTITUTION, ADOPTED FEB. 18, 1884.

¶ We whose names are subscribed, unite to promote the true worship of God and the welfare of mankind.

Article 1. The name of this society shall be the "First Unitarian Parish of Ayer."

Art. 2. The membership of this Parish shall consist of all who sign this constitution with the consent of the Parish Committee.

Art. 3. The officers of this Parish shall be a Clerk, Treasurer, Collector, Parish Committee, Board of Assessors, Pastoral Committee, and Committee on Hospitality. All officers shall be chosen at the annual meeting, and by ballot, excepting the Pastoral Committee and the Committee

on Hospitality, which may be chosen in any manner the Parish may direct. All officers may be instructed or displaced by others chosen at any meeting regularly called and held for the purpose.

Art. 4. The Clerk shall make a full record of all meetings of the Parish, and call meetings when directed by the Parish committee.

Art. 5. The Treasurer shall hold, in the name of the Parish, all property belonging thereto, and keep an accurate account of all money received into or paid out of the treasury. Money shall be paid out only upon an order of a majority of the Parish Committee, or a vote of the Parish.

Art. 6. The collector shall collect all money which may be due the Parish, and pay the same duly to the Treasurer, who may also receive directly any money due the Parish.

Art. 7. The Parish Committee shall subject to the direction of the Parish, provide for the conduct of religious services, have charge of all financial interests, issue warrants for meetings, provide for the proper care of the House of Worship, and in all practicable ways promote the welfare of the Parish.

Art. 8. The Pastoral Committee shall perform all special work which may be arranged in consultation with the Pastor, or otherwise, for the good of the Parish, or for the relief or comfort of any who may be in need.

Art. 9. The Committee on Hospitality shall give a cordial welcome to all strangers, and make constant endeavors to increase the attendance upon religious services by courteous attention to all who may be present at the services, or induced to attend them.

Art. 10. The annual meeting of the Parish shall be held on the first Wednesday in January. Special meetings may be called at any time by the Parish Committee, and shall be called upon request, in writing, of five or more members of the Parish. Notice of all meetings shall be given by posting a warrant at the door of the house of worship, two Sundays previous to the time of the meeting. The warrant shall plainly and distinctly state the objects for which any meeting shall be called.

Art. 11. Amendments or a revision of this constitution may be voted by a majority of any meeting of the Parish, provided that such amendments or revision shall have been proposed for consideration at a legal meeting, held at least one week previous to that on which final action shall be taken.

APPENDIX C.

Technical informalities appearing in the records of the society relative to apparent failure to file the original organization with the Town Clerk for record, changes of name without authority of the General Court, etc. An act of confirmation was passed by the General Court of 1886 as follows :

CHAP. 40. An Act to confirm and make valid the organization and proceedings of the South Groton Christian Union of Ayer, and to change the name of said organization. Be it enacted etc., as follows :

SECT. 1. The organization as a corporation of the South Groton Christian Union, afterward known as The First Congregational Unitarian Society and as The First Unitarian Parish of Ayer and by other names, which organization was originally effected on the twelfth day of August in the year eighteen hundred and fifty-five under general laws, and all gifts, devises, bequests and conveyances to, and all conveyances and transfers by, said corporation, of real or personal estate under either of said names or under whatsoever name the same shall have been made, and the records of said corporation under whatsoever name the same appear to be written ; and all the acts done and performed by its officers in their official or supposed official capacities as officers of said corporation, or by committees, are hereby fully ratified and confirmed, and the same shall be taken and deemed to be good and valid in law to all intents and purposes whatsoever, and the several persons now appearing by the records of said corporation to have been chosen as officers or committees thereof at its last annual meeting are hereby authorized to perform all their respective official duties until their successors shall be chosen and qualified. But nothing in this act shall be construed to continue in force any by-law of said corporation repugnant to the laws of the Commonwealth.

SECT. 2. The corporate name of said society shall be The First Unitarian Parish of Ayer.

SECT. 3. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

(Official certification by the Speaker of the House, President of the Senate and approval of the Governor.)

House of Representatives, March 3, 1886. Passed to be enacted. J. Q. A. Brackett, Speaker.

In Senate, March 4, 1886. Passed to be enacted. A. E. Pillsbury, President.

March 5, 1886. Approved. Geo. D. Robinson.

Original Hymn,

Written by MR. HOBART CLARK, for the occasion of the
ordination of MR. A. E. GOODNOUGH, Sept. 11, 1878.

In gold and crimson garments clad,
The hills and valleys far and near
Proclaim, O Lord! in chorus glad
Thy coronation of the year.

May we, thy children gathered now,
Intent to do a work of thine,
From this thy faithful year learn how
To make our work like its, divine.

Thro' storm and sunshine, mist and rain,
In might fulfilling all thy word,
Steadfast as earth may we remain
Until our inmost life is stirred.

As all in nature moves, with might
May we press on, hand, mind, and soul ;
Pastor and people towards thy light
Until true faith shall make us whole.

May every earnest thought and deed,
May every sweet and sacred song,
Each spoken word, each prayer like seed
Of thine, with our whole might be strong.

So shall the autumn of our years
With asters crowned and golden rod,
Bear its full fruit and ripened ears ;
Our might shall be the might of God.

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